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SEE WHAT'S NEW... CHECK OUT OUR LATEST OFFER ON PAGE 27

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NEWS WORTH SHARING.

Way's all clear for faith-based law school

Province gives green light to Langley's Trinity Western University PAGE 3

Canucks lose D-man Stanton to injury

Blue-liner sent back to Vancouver for evaluation while team stays on the road PAGE 31

South Sudan could crumble over violence

Fear of civil war looms as at least 500 people have been killed in the last four days PAGE 12

THESE GIFTS JUST MIGHT MAKE SOME BELIEVERS OUT OF FRIENDS, FAMILY

LOOK TO THE STARS TO DECIDE WHAT TO GET YOUR FAVOURITE LEO OR CAPRICORN PAGE 28

Coun. Tim Stevenson walks along Vancouver's rainbow crosswalk on Davie Street. The city will pay for Stevenson, who is gay, to travel to Sochi to promote LGBTQ rights. EMILY JACKSON/METRO FILE

City paying to send councillor to Sochi Games

LGBTQ campaigning. Council opens up wallet after allegations of conflict of interest arise

Vancouver will foot the bill to send a gay councillor to the Sochi Olympics to promote LGBTQ rights to the International Olympic Committee.

City council voted unanimously Wednesday to pay for Coun. Tim Stevenson's trip to Russia, where anti-gay sentiments are entrenched in law.

Local developers initially offered to fund the trip, but the city stepped in after allegations the donations amounted to a conflict of interest.

Both the city manager and the city solicitor found there was no conflict in accepting donations, as it's common for community members to donate to city initiatives.

Nevertheless, the city will pay to show its strong support for Stevenson's mission and to dispel any notions of impropriety. It will release a breakdown of expenses afterward.

"We have a responsibility as a former host city to continue to advance our influence," Mayor Gregor Robertson told council, noting Vancouver's Games were the first with a dedicated Pride House.

He was "extremely frustrated" the debate had turned political and called suggestions that developer cash might influence council decisions "ridiculous."

Donations, including $25,000 each from developers Bob Rennie and Peter Wall, will still be used to pay for the two travellers accompanying Stevenson. The total cost for all three is estimated at $100,000.

While in Sochi, Stevenson will advocate for a Pride House at all future Olympics and ask the IOC to protect the rights of the LGBTQ community in its charter.

The journey could put him at personal risk, as it's illegal to promote homosexuality in Russia. Stevenson is concerned, he said, but it's far more important for Canada and Vancouver to stand up for human rights.

It was an emotional decision for members of the LGBTQ community, including Stevenson.

Russia's tactics against homosexuality have galvanized the gay-rights movement, just as the Stonewall riots did in 1969, said Dean Nelson, founder of Vancouver's Pride House.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

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Tell me the story of Everest," she said, a fervent smile sweeping across her face, creasing the corners of her eyes. "Tell me about this mountain that's stealing you away from me."
George and Ruth sat on the drawing room floor, laughing and tipsy, dinner growing cold on the table in the next room. Ruth was cross-legged opposite him, her gray skirt pulled tight across her knees. She picked up the single sheet of thick ivory paper from her lap and reread the invitation from the newly formed Mount Everest Committee again. "My husband, the world-famous explorer." Ruth held up her glass of wine and he reached out with his own, the crystal ringing in the lamplit room. She was fairly bursting with happiness.
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'Swirl Face'

Crown claims convicted B.C. pedophile accessed porn

A British Columbia man who spent five years in a Thai prison for sexually abusing children after an image of his digitally obscured face was reconstructed is facing new allegations that he has viewed child pornography since returning to Canada.

Christopher Neil, a former English teacher from Maple Ridge who became known as "Swirl Face" due to the effect used to alter his face on digital images, was arrested in Bangkok in the fall of 2007. He pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting one boy and was later convicted of assaulting another.

While he wasn't charged under Canadian law, Neil has been under a series of strict conditions meant to protect children since he returned to the country in September 2012.

Earlier this year, he pleaded guilty to violating a condition that prohibited him from possessing devices that could access the Internet.

During a hearing related to his sentencing on Wednesday, a Crown prosecutor revealed police had found evidence on Neil's laptop that indicated the computer had been used to view child pornography.

Crown counsel Gerri-Lyn Nelson said police seized three devices in August from the house where Neil has been living in Vancouver. The seized items included a laptop, a Kindle e-reader, and a cellphone.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

More green than white on Cypress Mountain

A snowboarder rides a chairlift at Cypress Mountain Wednesday. A lack of snow has left the local mountains with little useable terrain for skiers and snowboarders. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Trinity Western U law school clears final hurdle

Faith-based law school. President says equality concerns fall outside gov't purview

MATT KIELTYKA
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The path to Canada's first faith-based law school has been cleared.

Two days after receiving preliminary approval from the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, the province of British Columbia has given its final approval for Trinity Western University's proposed law school.

Advanced Education Minister Amrik Virk said the program meets the degree-program quality-assessment criteria for private and out-of-B.C. institutions, and that the opposition to the plans — based on fears about the school's religious views on homosexuality, sex and equality — "fall outside the purview" of government.

Virk said he was aware a legal challenge against the approval may be coming, but insisted that the private Christian university in Langley satisfied government, the Federation of Law Societies and the Degree Quality Assessment Board academic requirements to exist.

The debate about whether gay students would be welcome and feel comfortable attending the school is "not within the mandate of the ministry," Virk said.

Toronto lawyer Clayton Ruby said earlier this week he's willing to launch a constitutional challenge in court against the school should the government approve the law program.

"The federation's decision is unconstitutional," Ruby said Monday. "The door for gay and lesbian lawyers and judges has closed a little bit tighter."

A "Say No To Trinity Western Law" crowd-funding campaign on GoFundMe.com was launched by Toronto law student Marcus McCann immediately following the government's decision, and had raised more than $3,000 within two hours of the approval being granted.

But TWU president Bob Kuhn dismissed concerns.

"It needs to be said that all students (gay or straight) are welcome to attend Trinity Western University, providing they meet our academic requirements and agree to respect our community values," he wrote Wednesday.

Now that it has final approval, the university hopes to have the school of law running by 2016.

Legal niche

The school will specialize in charities/not-for-profit law and entrepreneurial law.

Canada Post. Councillor proposes 'neighbourhood-based' mailboxes

A Vancouver councilllor worried about how seniors and people with disabilities will collect their mail once Canada Post stops home delivery wants the city to plan for the impending change.

Coun. George Affleck will bring forward a motion asking staff to develop and design new mail collection boxes to place near existing neighbourhood services, he announced Wednesday.

Such "neighbourhood-based" mailboxes could be near services such as book exchanges, community gardens or notice boards to mitigate the loss of home delivery, he proposed.

Canada Post announced last week it would stop door-to-door delivery in urban areas to cut costs at the struggling service. On Wednesday, Canada Post CEO Deepak Chopra told MPs that when seniors were consulted they said they want exercise and fresh air when picking up their mail.

Council will consider the motion in the new year.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Equipment seized. Two more rogue dentistry practices uncovered

The College of Dental Surgeons of B.C. has uncovered two more illegal dentistry practices in the Lower Mainland.

Hua Zheng Huang of East Vancouver and Vladimir Shapoval of Coquitlam have never been registered as dentists in the province, but both were practising out of their homes, according to a statement from the college on Wednesday.

The college has taken legal action against both men in the B.C. Supreme Court to ensure they stop pretending to be dentists and treating patients.

Huang, who attracted attention after a patient complained, agreed on Tuesday to an injunction to stop practising.

But Shapoval also faces contempt of court charges, as this isn't the first time he has practised without a licence.

In 2006, the college banned him from practising in the province after someone complained about their treatment from him. His case will go before the courts in the New Year.

Vladimir Shapoval of Coquitlam was practicing dentistry illegally. CONTRIBUTED

The men came to the College's attention after rogue Burnaby "dentist" Tung Sheng (David) Wu made headlines this summer.

The college seized dental equipment from their homes in October after extensive surveillance. Unlike Wu's case, however, a public health alert will not be issued because some sanitation measures were taken. EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Accused of voyeurism

American coach to spend Christmas behind bars

The American coach and substitute teacher accused of planting a video camera in the hotel room of his female students will spend the holidays in a B.C. jail.

The bail hearing for 43-year-old Jason Paur of Seattle was put over until January by a provincial court judge in Vernon.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

New Westminster

Assault victim not expected to survive: Police

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team was called to New Westminster Tuesday night after a badly injured man was discovered, the victim of a suspected assault. Police say the man is not expected to survive. Police have already made an arrest in connection with the incident.

SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/METRO

Dominatrix Terri-Jean Bedford speaks to reporters outside the Ontario Court of Appeal in Toronto on Dec. 2, 2010. The court ruled in 2012 that Canada's ban on brothels is unconstitutional, but the government appealed that decision. DARREN CALABRESE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sex-work verdict 'a very big deal'

Optimism. Supreme Court's decision in six-year case could lead to prostitution being largely decriminalized

KATE WEBB
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Vancouver sex workers are optimistically awaiting a final verdict from Canada's highest court six years in the making that could see prostitution largely decriminalized.

Katrina Pacey is the litigation director at Vancouver's Pivot Legal Society, which is an intervener in Bedford vs. Canada.

The case is being deliberated by the nine Supreme Court justices in Ottawa, and Pacey will be there on Friday when they deliver their decision.

If the three Ontario sex workers who challenged Canada's prostitution laws get their way, brothels, soliciting prostitution and living off the avails of prostitution could all become legal.

"This is going to be one of the biggest cases in Canadian history," Pacey said on Wednesday. "Striking down an entire legal framework is a very big deal."

Last year, five Ontario Court of Appeal judges unanimously agreed that the ban on brothels puts prostitutes in danger and violates their charter rights.

They also decided to amend the ban on living on the avails of prostitution, to make it clear that it should only be illegal in cases in which sex workers are exploited.

But the panel upheld the ban on soliciting in its decision as a reasonable way to protect communities.

Both the government and the sex workers appealed the decisions against them.

All three decisions could either be upheld on Friday or thrown out, and there will be little room left for further charter challenges once they are announced, Pacey said.

Vancouver Police Department spokesman Brian Montague said Wednesday it would be "inappropriate" for law enforcement to comment the case before the decision is made.

However, since the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry began in 2011 the VPD has been working with Pacey to put protocols in place requiring officers to take violence against sex workers more seriously.

"If you look at our sex-work enforcement guidelines, brothels or 'indoor-based' sex work is discussed within the VPD's overall policy," Montague wrote in an email.

"It explains that in many situations enforcement is, for lack of a better term, a last resort."

Justin Trudeau chats with Irene Thomas in Downtown Eastside yesterday. SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/METRO

Trudeau serves up food, politics

Justin Trudeau threw on an apron to feed local residents and talk politics during a visit to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside on Wednesday.

Trudeau stopped by to help Guru Nanak's Free Kitchen, a volunteer organization that regularly provides free food to those in need, as part of his three-day B.C. visit.

Many lined up to receive a plate of warm food from the Liberal leader. One of the attendees included Irene Thomas, who made her way through a crowd in her wheelchair just to catch a glimpse of Trudeau.

"It was great to meet him. I'm just so thrilled. I feel like his grandma," she said after kissing Trudeau's cheek.

Following the event, Trudeau addressed the media to discuss various issues including prostitution decriminalization, immigration policies and legalizing marijuana.

During his Victoria and Vancouver visit, Trudeau has met with party volunteers, business leaders and various community groups.

SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/METRO

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Bong Warehouse. Owner accuses city of bong-doing for spike in licensing fee

The owner of a marijuana paraphernalia store on Vancouver Island says his business has been snuffed out after the city increased the cost of his business licence by a factor of 20.

Ryan Place, who runs the Bong Warehouse in Esquimalt, alleges he's being discriminated against and plans to leave.

The store first drew the ire of local politicians in April when residents complained about its bong-shaped mascot. Coun. Tim Morrison proposed a bylaw restricting the use of mascots and briefly considered banning the sale of drug paraphernalia within the city.

The dust-up brought international headlines and a lampooning on the Colbert Report.

Eventually, council decided to lump the business in with other establishments — including pubs, beer stores and payday loan vendors — which pay a higher annual licensing fee.

Why the difference?

Coun. Tim Morrison said the town charges a higher fee to certain businesses because they require more staff time and police resources.

The change means the cost of a licence will increase from $100 to $2,000.

Both Morrison and acting mayor Lynda Hundleby denied that the purpose of the bylaw was to force the Bong Warehouse to pack up shop.

"I know a number of people in the community who will be quite happy he's leaving, but he has the freedom to stay in Esquimalt," Morrison said.

LUKE SIMCOE/METRO IN VICTORIA

Millions in legal costs. No interference in paying Basi, Virk bills, says AG

B.C.'s auditor general says he found no political interference in the government's decision to pay $6 million in legal bills for former ministerial aides David Basi and Bobby Virk, who pleaded guilty to fraud-related charges.

Russ Jones says the government acted legally in doling out $11 million in legal costs to government employees facing criminal or civil proceedings, including Basi and Virk who were charged in connection with the sale of BC Rail a decade ago.

Jones says his audit examined 26 indemnity agreements between 1996 and 2011 involving 100 individuals.

Jones makes 10 recommendations including improving how the indemnity reports are administered by the government and reported publicly.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Lost presents

RCMP try to save Christmas

Mounties on Northern Vancouver Island are showing their elven qualities as they try to reunite a bag of goodies with a deserving child.

Sayward RCMP Const. Steven Thackeray says a road-maintenance crew working near the community spotted the large bag along Highway 19 on Dec. 15.

He says the crew quickly realized the items were intended as Christmas gifts.

No one has come forward to claim the bag.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Learning opportunity

Bunny boom takes over Vancouver Island University

Feral rabbits are breeding like … well, rabbits at Vancouver Island University. Estimates place their number at more than 100.

Liz Gillis, an animal biologist and VIU professor, has been gathering data on the rabbits with the help of her students.

For example, one student is testing natural rabbit repellants. She's spraying plots of grass and checking for the presence of rabbit feces to see if the products work.

LUKE SIMCOE/METRO IN VICTORIA

B.C.'s marine oil-spill response team practices an emergency clean-up in Howe Sound. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

Oil-spill plan not sufficient: Mayor

Overhaul. Mayor of Belcarra says proposal by Kinder Morgan still not quick enough

MATT KIELTYKA
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A proposed overhaul of the region's marine oil-spill response isn't enough to protect the Burrard Inlet, according to the mayor of Belcarra.

Within its facilities application for the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion — filed with the National Energy Board on Monday — Kinder Morgan lays out a number of enhancements to the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC).

They include five new response bases along Vancouver Island and the South Coast, drastically cut response times — from six hours to two within Port Metro Vancouver and 18 hours to six along the southern shipping route — the purchase of new response barges and skimming vessels and increasing WCMRC's full-time staff from 30 to 90.

"The capital cost … is thought to be in the order of $70 to $100 million," said Mike Davies, senior director of marine development at Kinder Morgan.

Criticism

"It's a generic one-size-fits-all response plan.... It needs to go further."

Balcarra Mayor Ralph Drew

But the plan is already taking some criticism.

Balcarra Mayor Ralph Drew gives credit to Kinder Morgan for the overall plan but says the central Burrard Inlet village is not adequately protected.

In particular, Drew argues the maximum two-hour response time in the Port Metro Vancouver area isn't quick enough.

The WCMRC response base is located right in the inlet and should be able to respond within an hour, he says.

"It's right on their doorstep," said Drew. "An hour can make a big difference."

The village sent a letter to Kinder Morgan earlier this month urging them to consider installing pre-deployed booms near sensitive areas but has not heard back.

Vancouver city council voted Wednesday to apply for intervenor status in the National Energy Board hearings.

The Robson and Thurlow #VanKiss location. SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/METRO

Mistletoe mystery enchants romantics

Mysterious Vancouver elves are planning on spreading love and holiday cheer this month.

An anonymous group that identifies themselves as #VanKiss Elves have been attaching bouquets of mistletoes on lamp poles across the city.

The group tweeted about the first mistletoe on Dec. 12. Since then, numerous couples have stopped under the pole to share a kiss. This resulted in an explosion of kisses being shared on social media.

"I think it's a good idea," said Lauren Dorer while waiting at a nearby bus stop. "They should have more."

So far 10 locations have been identified as #VanKiss spots. These locations are fast becoming hot places to visit in Vancouver.

Some of the locations include Davie Street near English Bay, Robson Street at Thurlow Street and Davie Street at Thurlow Street.

The mistletoes will be up until the New Year.

SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/METRO

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Ukraine. PM promises financial stability after Moscow deal

Ukraine's leadership on Wednesday praised a Russia-financed bailout as a guarantee of financial stability, while opposition activists claimed the deal is likely to worsen economic troubles.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday pledged to buy $15 billion worth of Ukrainian bonds and sharply cut the price of natural gas in an effort to relieve political pressure on Ukraine's embattled president, Viktor Yanukovych.

The Ukrainian economy risks a default next year, and over the past months Yanukovych has actively lobbied both Russia and the European Union for a financial life jacket.

His decision last month to opt for a deal with Russia triggered a wave of demonstrations that have crystallized into a large, round-the-clock protest camp in Independence Square in Kyiv, the country's capital.

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov told a Cabinet meeting that the deal with Russia ensures "people's confidence in a stable life," while an association agreement with Europe would have given Ukraine a "New Year's present" of "bankruptcy and social collapse," according to the Interfax news agency.

It is unclear what Putin asked in return for his financial support, but reports suggest that Moscow wants Ukraine to purchase more natural gas and import Russian coal.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Romania. Officials accused of taking bribes for giving tips on corpses

Some 26 Romanian police officers and ambulance employees have been charged with calling undertakers to tell them that someone had died — or in some cases were not yet dead — in exchange for money.

Officials say the suspects called funeral parlour managers about people who had died in car accidents or collapsed on the street.

Prosecutor Corina Paraschivescu told The Associated Press on Wednesday that 26 officials, 10 of them police officers, had been charged. Six of them were under arrest for about a month because they were considered "a social danger." She said police and emergency officials would contact undertakers with the names and address of the deceased or gravely injured from the identity cards that Romanians always carry or send the telephone numbers of family members from victims' mobile phones. Undertakers would then contact the families to try to sell funeral services.

Local Romanian media reported that officials got up to 170 euros ($235) for information on a fresh corpse. Police earn between 600 euros and 2,100 euros a month.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Guantanamo Bay

Troops want U.S. Navy to remove nativity scenes

Some troops at Guantanamo Bay want the U.S. Navy to remove nativity scenes and Christmas decorations from two base dining facilities, saying they improperly promote Christianity over other faiths, an organization that advocates for religious freedom in the military said Wednesday.

A group of 18 service members from several faiths contacted the Military Religious Freedom Foundation for help in removing the Nativity scenes and decorations because they figured they would be ignored and feared retribution, said Mikey Weinstein, the president of the organization. The troops, he added, also prefer to remain anonymous because of a possible backlash.

"They are terrified," Weinstein said. "Right now, there is a witch hunt going on to find out who did this." Eleven of the troops who complained are Protestant and Catholic and the rest are Muslim, Jewish, agnostic or atheist, Weinstein said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russia approves new amnesty bill

Protesters. The bill could apply to Greenpeace activists and the two jailed members of the Pussy Riot punk band

Greenpeace International activists Philip Ball and Camila Speziale embrace after hearing the Russian parliament passed an amnesty bill that would likely pardon them, in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Wednesday.

DMITRI SHAROMOV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL

Russia's parliament on Wednesday passed an amnesty bill that will likely apply to the 30-member crew of a Greenpeace ship detained after an Arctic protest, but it wasn't immediately clear if and when the activists, including two Canadians, would be allowed to leave the country.

A spokesman for Greenpeace said the organization had hoped Paul Ruzycki of Port Colborne, Ont., and Alexandre Paul of Montreal and 28 other activists could return home by Christmas, but that seems unlikely given the amount of red tape surrounding their release.

At the earliest, they may make it in time to ring in the new year, Diego Creimer told The Canadian Press.

The amnesty, which also would likely free the two jailed members of the Pussy Riot punk band, has been largely viewed as the Kremlin's attempt to soothe criticism of Russia's human rights records ahead of the Winter Olympics in Sochi next year. But opposition lawmakers argued it doesn't go nearly far enough and the complicated legislation appeared to leave many questions open.

The State Duma on Wednesday voted 446-0 in favour of the carefully tailored bill, which mostly applies to those who haven't committed violent crimes, first-time offenders, minors and women with small children. Lawmakers said they expect about 2,000 people to be released from jail.

The Duma adopted last-minute amendments to the bill to include suspects of hooliganism who are still awaiting trial, a provision that could apply to the crew of a Greenpeace ship facing those charges after their September's protest in the Arctic.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Still in limbo

Family 'cautiously optimistic'

The sister of one of two Canadian Greenpeace activists facing charges in Russia says she's "cautiously optimistic" that an amnesty bill passed Wednesday in Moscow will apply to them.

Patricia Ruzycki Stirling said the news brought some relief from the anxiety that has plagued her family for months, but the tight-knit clan won't celebrate until Paul Ruzycki is back on Canadian soil. When he does arrive, however, his entire hometown will welcome him back with a massive party, she said.

"All he said was, 'We've been on this roller-coaster before,'" she told The Canadian Press. "He said, 'Things look good but please don't get all your hopes up until I call you and say I've signed my papers and we're headed to the airport,'" she said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Liberal MP sorry for comments about actress Pamela Anderson

A Liberal MP in Newfoundland says he is sorry for "intemperate" comments he made on social media after actress Pamela Anderson and Sam Simon, co-creator of "The Simpsons," visited his province offering fishermen money to stop hunting seals.

Gerry Byrne has posted an online apology to Anderson and Simon, who were in St. John's, N.L., on Tuesday to offer $1 million to the Canadian Sealers Association to help bring an end to the commercial hunt.

According to a screen grab of his Twitter account, posted online by CBC, Byrne tweeted: "Hey Pam, here's a thought. Take your million and donate it to...sexually transmitted disease prevention education. Good self-promotion."

Another message from his account referred to Anderson and Simon as "a has been 'actor' with an incurable STD and a guy dying of cancer."

Anderson was diagnosed with hepatitis C in 2001. Simon's terminal cancer was detected through much of his body last year.

In the apology on his website, Byrne says his comments were the result of "frustration, disappointment and anger" after hearing comments about the seal hunt and those who conduct it by people opposed to the industry.

"To all whom I have offended in any way, including Ms. Anderson and Mr. Simon, I sincerely apologize and retract the statements I made on social media. Our strong differences regarding what I believe to be a humane and sustainable harvest of seals off the Canadian coastline and what others may see it as may remain but I apologize for stepping beyond that debate."

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Rescued crane operator suffers severe burns after massive fire

Kingston, Ont.
Authorities concerned damaged crane could come crashing down

A 68-year-old construction worker stranded atop a crane at the centre of a massive fire in Kingston, Ont., was "severely burned" before a military helicopter was able to navigate smoke and leaping flames to airlift him to safety.

Adam Jastrzebski, who had burns to his hands, legs, back and buttocks, was recovering in hospital Wednesday after his dramatic rescue a day earlier, said his employer at Canadian Professional Crane Inc.

"He's in severe pain right now in the hospital and they're giving him morphine," said Aram Malek.

"I'm just surprised no one got hurt more than that because the fire was enormous."

Firefighters from neighbouring communities had to be called in on Tuesday afternoon to help Kingston crews battle the flames which had engulfed an apartment building that was under construction.

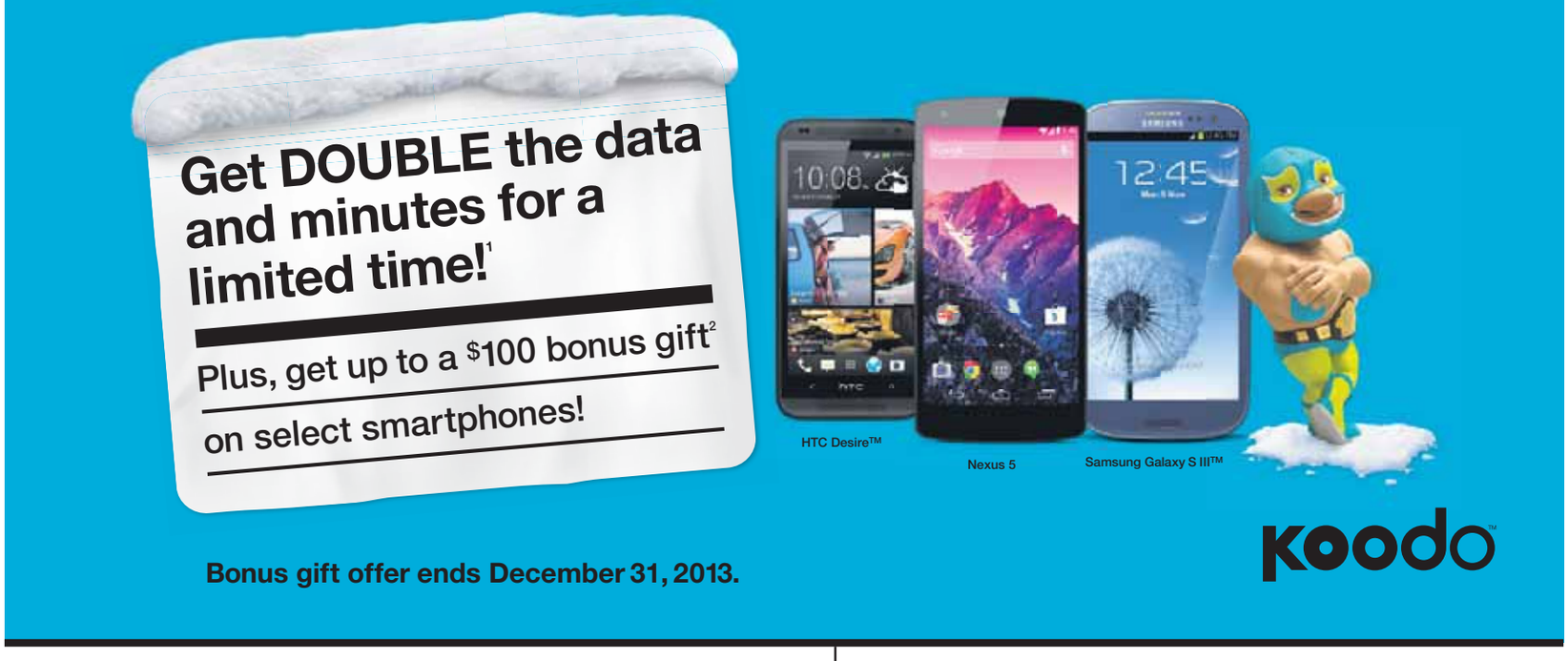
A crowd watched from the streets as the crane operator got out of his cab, crept along the boom of the crane to its very edge and waited to be rescued by a team from CFB Trenton.

Meanwhile, authorities focused their attention Wednesday on the charred crane which towered above the still-smouldering remains of the building at the heart of the blaze.

"Right now our biggest risk is having that crane in its current condition," said Kingston fire chief Rheaume Chaput. "It's been impinged by fire and is in a damaged condition. So we want to make sure we make that safe, get that down."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Members of 424 Squadron, from left, Capt. Jean-Benoit Girard-Beauseigle, Master Cpl. Matt Davidson, Cpl. Iain Cleaton, Sgt. Cory Cisyk and Capt. David Agnew, pose for media at CFB Trenton on Wednesday. Inset: Sgt. Cisyk rescues a crane operator who was stranded at the end of his crane during a huge fire in Kingston, Ont., on Tuesday. LARS HAGBERG/THE CANADIAN PRESS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Ethnic violence kills 500 in four days as South Sudan crisis grows

Worries of looming civil war. UN chief calls for urgent solution as 20,000 forced to seek refuge

At least 500 people, most of them soldiers, have been killed in South Sudan since Sunday, a senior government official said, as an ethnic rivalry threatened to tear apart the world's newest country.

The clashes apparently are pitting soldiers from the majority Dinka tribe of President Salva Kiir against those from ousted Vice-President Riek Machar's Nuer ethnic group, raising concerns the violence could degenerate into a civil war.

Fighting spread on Wednesday to Jonglei, the largest state in South Sudan, where troops loyal to Machar were said to be trying to take control of Bor, the state capital.

Machar himself is the subject of a manhunt by the country's military after he was identified by Kiir as the leader of an alleged coup attempt on Sunday. Machar has denied he was behind any coup attempt.

Barnaba Marial Benjamin, the foreign minister, told The Associated Press late Wednesday that there was heavy fighting in Bor, but he denied renegade soldiers had overtaken it.

At least 19 civilians have been killed in violence in Bor, said Martin Nesirky, a spokesman for the UN secretary-general's office, citing figures from the South Sudan Red Cross.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon told reporters Wednesday that South Sudan was experiencing a political crisis that "urgently needs to be dealt with through political dialogue." Ban said he urged Kiir "to resume dialogue with the political opposition."

South Sudan has been plagued by ethnic violence since it peacefully broke away from Sudan in 2011 after decades of civil war.

The violence has forced about 20,000 people to seek refuge at UN facilities in Juba since Sunday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Civilians arrive at the UN mission in Juba, South Sudan, to take refuge on Tuesday. A political crisis has since Sunday turned into ethnic violence resulting in the deaths of 500 and the displacement of 20,000. ROLLA HINEDI/UNMISS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Analysis

Breakout still unclear

Casie Copeland, the South Sudan analyst for the International Crisis Group who is in Juba, said key Nuer leaders in the army were defecting in Jonglei but that "events that led to Sunday's fighting remain unclear."

Toby Lanzer, the UN's humanitarian co-ordinator in South Sudan, said in a Twitter post that thousands of civilians in Jonglei had sought refuge at a UN facility there.

On Tuesday the United States ordered its citizens to leave South Sudan immediately.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Snowden seeking refuge in Brazil. Baird says NSA informer should surrender

National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden should abandon his bid for asylum in Brazil and surrender himself to the United States, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said Wednesday.

Baird told The Canadian Press that Snowden's actions have compromised global security.

The U.S. wants to prosecute Snowden, who was granted temporary asylum in Russia. The move angered the Obama administration and has chilled relations between Moscow and Washington.

"I think he should go back to the United States and face the consequences of his actions," Baird said when asked about Snowden's outreach to the Brazilian government this week.

Snowden's cache of documents showed that Brazil was a prime target of the NSA in Latin America.

It also suggests Canada's spying agency once monitored Brazil's mines and energy department and helped the U.S. and Britain spy on participants at the London G20 summit in 2009.

Give it up

"I think he should go back to the United States and face the consequences of his actions."

John Baird, Canada's foreign affairs minister, speaking about Edward Snowden's recent move to reach out to the government of Brazil for asylum.

In an open letter earlier this week, Snowden praised the Brazilian government for standing up to the U.S. for spying on the country.

Snowden's temporary asylum in Russia is to expire in August.

The Brazilian government has not given any signs of having a plan to take Snowden in.

Amnesty International has called on Brazil to seriously consider Snowden's asylum request.

Amnesty says he exposed the unlawful surveillance of private communications by the U.S. and that he might need refugee status.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Morsi faces death penalty in new trial accusing him of plotting wave of terror

Egyptian prosecutors on Wednesday announced a new trial of ousted president Mohammed Morsi and the top leaders of his Muslim Brotherhood, accusing them of conspiring with Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran's Revolutionary Guard and militant groups to carry out a wave of terrorism to destabilize the country.

The charges, which carry a potential death penalty, are the most sweeping and heaviest accusations yet in a series of trials against the Brotherhood. The new trial of Morsi, the three top Brotherhood leaders and 32 other defendants appeared aimed at crippling the top echelons of the group and further tarnishing the Brotherhood among the public ahead of a key January referendum on a new constitution.

The new military-backed government is seeking a strong "yes" vote for the constitution to show the legitimacy of the political transition process put in place after the military removed Morsi on July 3. Brotherhood supporters oppose the new document and have vowed protests against it.

Since the coup, prompted by massive protests calling for Morsi's removal, Egypt has been in continual unrest. Morsi supporters have been holding near daily protests demanding his reinstatement, met by a fierce security crackdown that has killed hundreds of people and arrested thousands of Brotherhood members

Meanwhile, a wave of retaliatory attacks by suspected Islamic militants have targeted Christians and security forces, and the Sinai Peninsula has been the centre of a mounting militant insurgency.

Throughout, the new government has depicted the Brotherhood as a violent movement that threatened the nation and forced the military to remove it from power. Previous, ongoing trials of Morsi and other Brotherhood leaders have focused on accusations of the group's alleged violence.

But the new charges take that claim to a new level, accusing the group of being enmeshed in deals with terrorists since 2005 aimed at attaining and holding onto power, of plotting the collapse of police and prison breaks during the 2011 uprising that brought autocrat Hosni Mubarak down and of organizing the Sinai militant backlash.

Ousted Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi after a news conference in Cairo in July 2012. MAYA ALLERUZZO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Mohammed el-Damati, a defence lawyer for the Brotherhood, denounced the new trial — and those already started — as "political," aiming to give a legal veneer to the crackdown.

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Rail service resumes in Lac-Mégantic after fatal disaster

Mixed feelings. Many locals still trying to cope with the tragedy, while businesses say rail service is vital for town's economy

Trains are rolling through Lac-Mégantic, Que., for the first time since last summer's deadly rail disaster.

Rail service resumed Wednesday in the town where a runaway train carrying crude oil derailed and exploded in July, killing 47 people.

The crash also destroyed part of Lac-Mégantic's downtown core.

Many locals are still trying to cope with the disaster and have mixed feelings about the train's return to the railway-dependent community.

Businesses along the railroad say the service is vital for the town's economy.

The gradual return of freight trains to Lac-Mégantic must follow strict rules and conditions. For now, no dangerous substances will be transported through the town, which is about 250 kilometres east of Montreal.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rail traffic resumed in Lac-Mégantic on Wednesday, five months after a runaway train killed 47 people. GRAHAM HUGHES/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Global poll

Canucks less likely to text holiday greetings

Would you dash off a quick text message to wish a friend or family member a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah or Joyous Kwanzaa instead of calling?

Cellphone-toting Canadians appear less likely than their global counterparts to text message home for the holidays, according to the results of an online Ipsos poll of 18,000 people in 24 countries.

Still, 59 per cent of poll respondents said they had done it in the past.

That was actually the lowest percentage among the countries involved in the survey and well below the global average of 73 per cent. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Defamation. Reporter accepts Ford's apology

Toronto Mayor Rob Ford has issued another apology and retracted comments he made about Toronto Star reporter Daniel Dale in a televised interview.

"I wholly retract my statements and apologize to Mr. Dale without reservation for what I said," Ford said in a statement Wednesday night.

Dale said he accepts Ford's apology, which he demanded last week in a libel notice that called on Ford to retract statements that the reporter said amounted to accusing him of pedophilia.

The notice also called for the mayor to issue an "unreserved, abject, complete apology" of all false claims about what happened during an incident near Ford's house in May 2012.

"I won't be taking legal action against the mayor, and I'm looking forward to getting back to work," Dale said on Twitter.

"I sincerely appreciate Mayor Ford's complete retraction and unqualified apology, and I'm very glad the truth is no longer in dispute," Dale tweeted. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Retraction

"There was no basis for saying as I did on Dec. 17 and in the past that Mr. Dale was 'lurking' or 'leering' near or over my fence or behaving surreptitiously."

Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, in reference to an apology he made Tuesday in Toronto city council.

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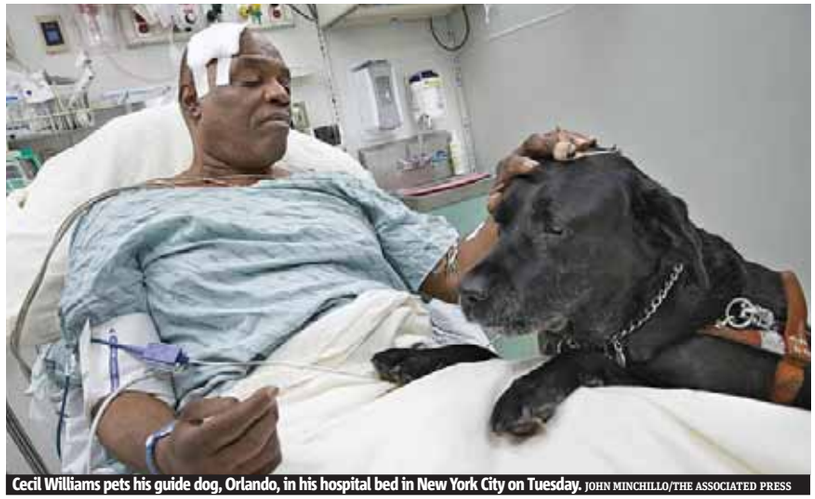

Cecil Williams pets his guide dog, Orlando, in his hospital bed in New York City on Tuesday. JOHN MINCHILLO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Heroic guide dog ready to retire

Too old to guide. Owner doesn't want to part with dog who leaped onto subway tracks to save him

Cecil Williams, who has been recovering at a New York City hospital with his guide dog Orlando still by his side, had been slated to get another working dog in January or February to replace the 11-year-old black lab who leaped onto subway tracks after his blind owner lost consciousness and fell off the station platform.

Now, he would ideally like to have two dogs — one working and one retired as a pet — if logistics, physical abilities and finances allow.

If that's not possible, the family that raised Orlando as a puppy says it will be "absolutely thrilled to have him back," said Guiding Eyes for the Blind spokeswoman Michelle Brier. "They're very thrilled their little baby has made such a big difference."

Williams said on Tuesday that he couldn't pay for a non-working dog, so he was planning to look for a good home for Orlando. Guiding Eyes provides working dogs for free but cannot cover retired dogs' expenses.

St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, where Williams is staying, has been fielding queries from well-wishers offering money and other assistance.

Williams said that if he does decide he's able to care for two dogs, he'd need help paying for the lab's care.

The organization was setting up a fund and planned to post information on its website. If it turns out Williams doesn't need the money, it will be used for other guide dogs.

Williams, 61, and Orlando both escaped serious injury Tuesday when they were bumped by a train passing over them — a miraculous end to a harrowing ordeal that began when Williams felt faint on his way to the dentist.

Witnesses said Orlando barked frantically and tried to stop Williams from tumbling off the platform. Matthew Martin told the New York Post that Orlando leaped onto the tracks as the train approached and kissed Williams to entice him to move. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christmas scam

Couple lied about stolen gifts: Cops

A Mississauga, Ont., couple who reported their Christmas gifts stolen — including an iPad for their son who has Down syndrome — have been charged with public mischief.

Peel police allege the pair fabricated the theft.

The man and woman claimed that they had been driving home from the mall on Saturday evening when a sheet of ice smashed their back window, causing their purchases to fly out of the vehicle and then be stolen. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Australia. Tourist on her phone plunges off pier while browsing Facebook

A woman was walking along a bay in Melbourne on Monday night when she became distracted by her Facebook feed and plummeted off the pier into the chilly water, Victoria state police said.

A witness called for help and police rushed to the woman's aid. They found her flailing around in the water, about 20 metres from the pier.

"She was still out in the water lying on her back in a floating position because she told us later that she couldn't swim," Senior Constable Dean Kelly of the state water police told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "She still had her mobile phone in her hand and initially she apologized and said sorry."

The woman was taken to a hospital for treatment.

"With Facebook, or social media in general as far as we're concerned, if you're anywhere near the water just pay attention," Kelly said. "Especially if you can't swim." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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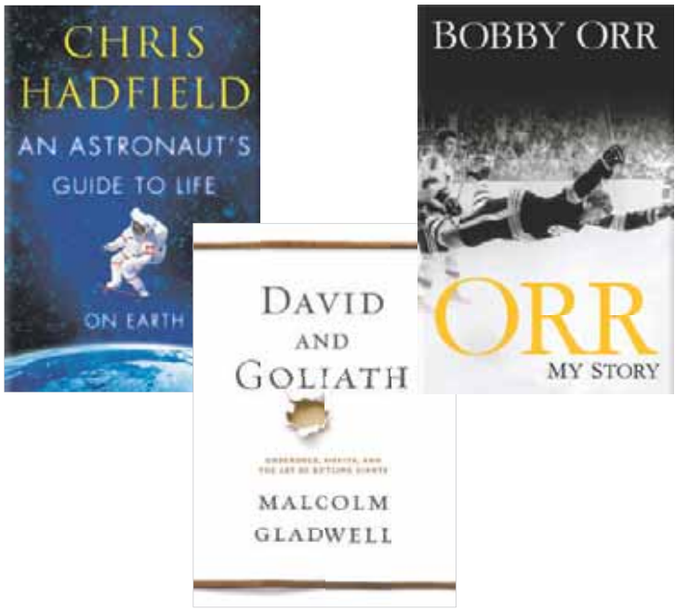

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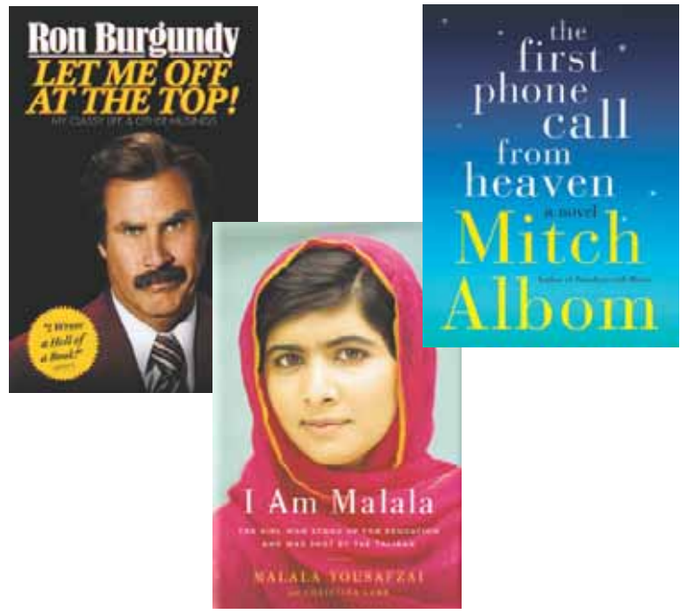

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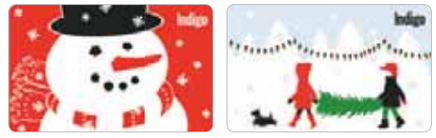

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Another blow for Bitcoin.
China exchange says it's no longer accepting yuan

The biggest Bitcoin exchange in China said Wednesday that it's no longer accepting yuan deposits, dealing another setback to the virtual currency.

BTC China's announcement on its Twitter-like Sina Weibo account comes two weeks after China's central bank said the country's banks and payments systems were barred from handling the virtual currency.

The exchange said that "due to the reasons that everyone knows, BTC China has to temporarily stop its yuan account recharging functions." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Central bank warning

- The Chinese central bank warned earlier this month that Bitcoins don't have any legal status or monetary equivalent and shouldn't be used as currency, adding that financial institutions and payment systems could not sell, trade or store Bitcoins.

Outcry creates change

German town strips Hitler of citizenship

A Bavarian town council has voted unanimously to strip Adolf Hitler of honorary citizenship bestowed 80 years ago, after an outcry prompted by their decision last week not to adopt a resolution denouncing the 1933 decision.

The issue came up after an archivist discovered documents showing both Hitler and the president who appointed him, Paul von Hindenburg, had been given honorary citizenship of Dietramszell.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

India swept with outrage over diplomat's treatment

Devyani Khobragade, India's deputy consul general in New York, at a fund raising event in New York last week. Prosecutors say Khobragade claimed on visa application documents she paid her Indian maid $4,500 US per month, but that she actually paid her less than $3 per hour. She plans to challenge the arrest. MOHAMMED JAFFER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

N.Y.C. Relations with the U.S. now heated after Indian diplomat arrested and strip searched

An Indian diplomat said U.S. authorities subjected her to a strip search, cavity search and DNA swabbing following her arrest on visa charges in New York City, despite her "incessant assertions of immunity."

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described the diplomat's treatment as "deplorable."

The case has sparked widespread outrage in India and infuriated the government, which revoked privileges for U.S. diplomats to protest her treatment. It has cast a pall over India-U.S. relations, which have cooled in recent years despite a 2008 nuclear deal that was hailed as a high point in the nations' ties.

Devyani Khobragade, India's deputy consul general in New York, was arrested Thursday outside of her daughter's Manhattan school on charges that she lied on a visa application about how much she paid her housekeeper.

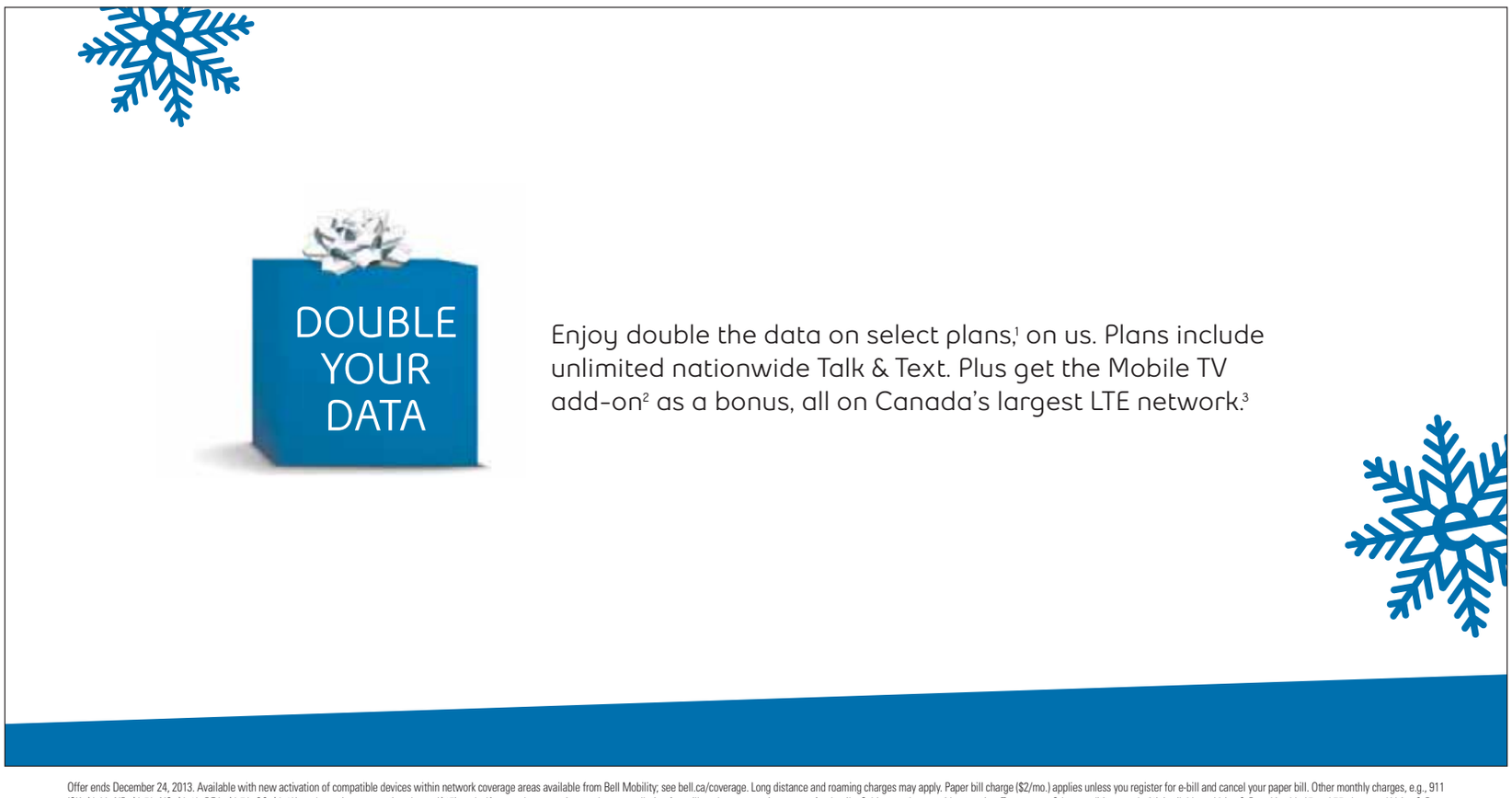
Prosecutors say the maid received less than $3 per hour for her work. Khobragade has pleaded not guilty.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

She says

"I broke down many times as the indignities of repeated handcuffing, stripping and cavity searches, swabbing, in a holdup with common criminals and drug addicts were all being imposed upon me despite my incessant assertions of immunity."

Devyani Khobragade, India's deputy consul general in New York, in an email describing her treatment.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Levelling wireless playing field

David and Goliath. Ottawa making the Big 3 play nice with smaller competitors

Canada's biggest telecom companies will be forced to renegotiate roaming rates they charge small rivals for using their networks as the federal government acts to create more competition in the telecom business.

Industry Minister James Moore said Wednesday that Ottawa is making legislative changes to prevent Rogers, Bell and Telus from making it difficult for new wireless players in the market.

"We just think the status quo is not good enough," Moore said in an interview from Ottawa.

"It's a nagging irritant to greater competition in the industry and we're fixing it."

Get more players off bench

"We do have fourth players in many markets of this country, but they're regional and not national. I think more competition can be realized."
Industry Minister James Moore

Ottawa will prevent the big wireless providers from charging small wireless companies more than they charge their own customers for domestic roaming. Moore said the government isn't regulating the price of roaming agreements, but added the Big Three can't make it impossible for new wireless companies to compete on price or take away their ability to invest in their networks.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

You spin me right 'round

Assaf Biderman, co-inventor of the Copenhagen Wheel and associate director of the SENSEable City Laboratory at MIT, poses with his invention at Superpedestrian, his venture-backed company in Cambridge, Mass. The startup is launching a new device that transforms almost any bicycle into an electric-hybrid vehicle using an app on a smartphone. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

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TSX 13,334.73 (+154.57)

OIL $97.80 US (+$0.58)

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TURKEY TROUBLE? LET'S TALK

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

I think I've finally found my calling — specifically, my turkey calling.

This holiday season, millions of Canadians from coast to coast will spend hours on the painstaking preparation of their Christmas turkey. And I want to take them under my wing.

You probably don't realize this, but I have been certified as the best Metro columnist/turkey preparer who uses my keyboard. And it's not often you hear those sorts of qualifications. In fact, family members and co-workers alike have long said that when they hear "turkey" they think "John Mazerolle."

I owe my love and intimate knowledge of turkey to the Internet. Namely, butterball.com, which I can say without hyperbole is the best-turkey preparation website I have ever seen this week while preparing for a column that is due in less than an hour.

Butterball's setup is really something. Did you know that for decades they've had a 1-800 line that people can call if they're having turkey trouble?

You call and "turkey experts" help you with what one recent television news report called "your turkey crisis." This is fabulous. I can't count the number of times some turkey-related event has cropped up in my life and I acted like a bird-brain — my prom night/pet turkey "incident," just for starters. And help was only a phone call away.

"Open every November and December, our 50+ experts answer more than 100,000 questions, in both English and Spanish, for thousands of households around the United States and Canada," the website chirps.

What's more, the turkey-talk call centre even added something special this year for the very first time: men.

This is where my calling comes in: I want to talk turkey. As a certified turkey expert, I would like be part of this important and trailblazing team.

For instance, I could explain to guys like me the importance of making sure the bird is not past its best-before date. (In my 20s I had several turkeys I received as Christmas bonuses ruined by two years in the freezer. When the third turkey arrived, the two-year-old bird would get the boot.)

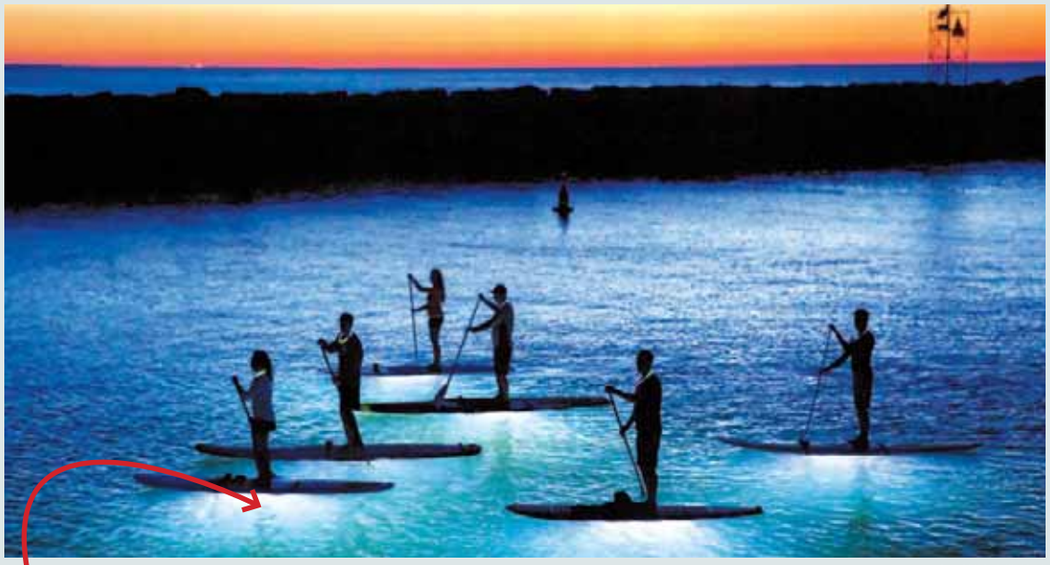
I also believe I could help with the efficiency of those 100,000-plus calls. I can assure you that by about the 300th time I was asked where the meat thermometer goes, I would have several alternative answers at the ready.

Without being sexist, I think I can say men deal with problems in their own special way. I'm sure the women giving thoughtful, detailed instructions over the phone will appreciate the counterpoint of me barking, "What do you mean it won't fit, force it!" and "It's fiiine, I'm sure it's fiiine. It's probably fine."

I must admit, also, that I like the idea of joining this flock because I assume all-you-can-eat turkey is a job perk. Which will be great for me, because despite my credentials and intimate knowledge of turkey, I've never actually cooked one successfully. White and dark meat, please. And cranberries if you've got them. Gobble gobble.

ZOOM

Glow with the flow



JULIA CUMES/SOLENT NEWS

LED lights added to paddle boards

The dark silhouettes of moonlit paddlers appear to be walking on water. The standup paddleboarding enthusiasts took to the water with specially made LED lights strapped to the bottom of their boards. The surreal image captures the moment Justin Labdon and his team of boarders headed out of a harbour in Dennis, Mass., one night.

METRO

Quoted

"Standing on the jetty photographing down, what I saw was even more beautiful and surreal than I was expecting."

Julia Cumes, 41, photographer based in Cape Cod, Mass.

Sea life attracted to board lights

The LED lights strapped to the bottom of the boards attract fish, including squid, blue fish and big striped bass, says Justin Labdon, owner of Adventure Chatham. Asked by Metro whether the light would entice larger predatory sea life, Labdon replied, "We don't venture out to shark-inhabited areas, but I would assume they might be attracted to the light as well." METRO

LED water sports

- $300 per LED-lit paddle board.
- AdventureChatham offers night-time paddle boarding excursions when there is a full moon out.
- Paddles with LED lights at the end are being considered as his company's next novelty water sports experience, says Labdon.

Clickbait

IRENE KUAN
irene.kuan@metronews.ca

GETTY IMAGES

If you've yet to complete your Christmas shopping by now, then you're in for a wild ride — looking for a parking spot at the mall, that is. A congested parking lot full of drivers with short fuses can turn into a real-life nightmare before Christmas. These apps will make looking for a parking spot the least of your worries during the busy shopping season.

Parkopedia:

This app works on all mobile platforms and is like Wikipedia for parking spaces. The creators have set out to map every parking lot and parking space in the world and so far has data, contributed by users, from 28 countries, covering over 25 million parking spots. The app can give directions to the parking space, and provide real-time availability, prices and payment options.

ParkMe:

ParkMe is an award-winning free app for iOS and Android that works to help you find the cheapest and closest parking spaces by providing the cost of parking before you arrive at your destination and lets you compare options. This app works in the U.S., Canada and in European cities.

Twitter

@metropicks asked: Calgary cabbies are eyeing a puke penalty to cover the cleanup cost. What is a sufficient penalty for puking in a cab?

@Cory_Boehm: A minimum of $200 seems more than reasonable.

@Canucklehead_ca: So drunk you puke in a cab? I suspect the next morning will present it's own penalty. Maybe two if you have an unknown guest.

@ryanjordandyck: can we get back to the real cab issue? Horrible customer service and lack of accountability? #yyc

@DeafPoet5: I dispatch at an Edmonton company. The going rate for screaming groceries is about $75, depending on how vile the mess is.

@jpmacnab: I think it is $ 50 in Ottawa

@santanapoptarts: barf bags extra large size and $10 keep it real, but the puker must realize its gross and ur in a cab #poordriver

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From Russia with unrequited love

Uncle Vanya.
Blackbird Theatre stages production of an Anton Chekhov classic starting next week

BACKSTAGE PASS
Graeme McRanor
vancouver@metronews.ca

It was first published in 1897 and premiered in 1899 in a production by the Moscow Art Theatre.

Since then, it's been staged countless times around the world. And, starting Monday, theatregoers can see Blackbird Theatre stage it in-the-round at The Cultch.

It's Anton Chekhov's Uncle Vanya. And you could say it has legs.

"Chekov's writing is considered by many to be the pinnacle of modern dramatic art — so it is with great pleasure and high expectation that we approach this work," says Blackbird's artistic director, John Wright.

"For my part, no other writer can enfold me in the life of the play and its characters as fully, yet subtly and artfully as Chekhov does. In his plays, comedy and despair are not opposites, but nuanced, co-existing elements of a unique and potent theatrical style."

The play features Anthony F. Ingram as Vanya, Robert Moloney as Astrov, Luisa Jojic as Yelena, Cherise Clarke as Sonya, and Duncan Fraser as Professor Serbryakov.

The script is based on a literal translation prepped for Blackbird by UBC Russian scholar Peter Petro. It's directed by Wright.

Uncle Vanya runs Monday through Jan. 18 at The Cultch. Tickets starts at $18.

More information at BlackbirdTheatre.ca or TheCultch.com.

Holiday movie pass

Looking for a break from family time over the holidays? Why not sneak off to a dark movie theatre? The VIFF Vancity Theatre offers the Holiday Film Pass. For $50 you can see as many films as you like between Saturday and Jan. 2. It's on sale until Monday. For more info visit viff.org.

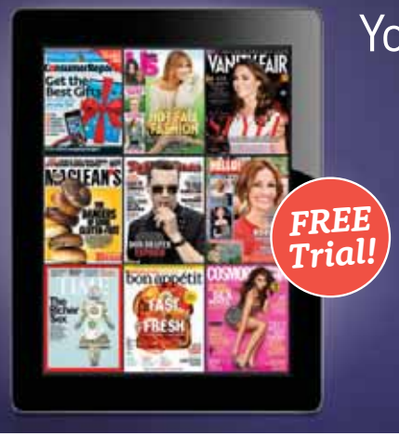
When Jews Were Funny

I'm not trying to be inflammatory with that headline — that's the actual title of the film that took home the Best Canadian Feature prize at the Toronto International Film Festival. An entertaining look at the history of Jewish humour, it screens four times at the VIFF Vancity Theatre from Friday through Jan. 2.

Prep work

"Chekov's writing is considered by many to be the pinnacle of modern dramatic art."
Blackbird's artistic director John Wright

Chekhov's Uncle Vanya will be performed at The Cultch beginning Monday by Blackbird Theatre. CONTRIBUTED



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Tyler Perry takes a turn for the serious

Gone Girl. The man behind Madea says working with David Fincher was 'awe-inspiring'

Tyler Perry writes, directs, stars in and produces his own movies and TV shows, so he doesn't have much time for outside projects. One he's glad he made work is a role in director David Fincher's upcoming film Gone Girl.

Based on the bestselling novel by Gillian Flynn, Gone Girl is the story of a man who comes under suspicion in the disappearance of his wife.

The movie, scheduled for release next October, stars Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike.

Gone Girl is "the most educational, awe-inspiring thing that I've ever done," Perry said in a recent interview.

"Sitting in his presence, in his genius, the man is a genius," he said of Fincher. "It really makes me go, 'Whoa, let me just stop and take this in,' so it's been wonderful."

And, as one filmmaker to another, he's humbled by working with the Oscar-nominated director.

"I'm a storyteller. That man is a di-rec-tor. He is amazing. And to watch him work and to watch how he paints his pictures, the tableaus, everything is really just beyond anything I could ever imagine."

Perry plays Madea, a big and boisterous grandmother he's made popular in previous movies, in Tyler Perry's A Madea Christmas, now in theatres.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tyler Perry is happy he made the time to work on Gone Girl with David Fincher.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"I'm a storyteller. That man is a di-rec-tor. He is amazing."

Tyler Perry on working on Gone Girl with Oscar-nominated director David Fincher

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There are holiday flicks and then there are flicks set during the holidays.
Two very different things, each offering their own twist on all the naughty and nice things the season has to offer.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

5 Non-festive holiday flicks

In Bruges

You'd have to pay attention to realize this dark comedy actually takes place during the holiday season — the only references are casual asides and the occasional shot of Christmas decorations in the background. And the plot itself is hardly cheer-filled: It centres on two hitmen, played by Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson, who are sent to Belgium to lay low after an especially messy job.

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

This is hardly holiday fare, unless you count perverse family dysfunction as a key hallmark of your seasonal gatherings. The horrors in this dark thriller kick off several days before Dec. 25 and unfold through a bitterly cold Scandinavian winter. It centres on a dogged journalist, played by Michael Nyqvist in the 2009 Swedish-language version and Daniel Craig in the 2011 remake, who traces the decades-old disappearance of a young woman with the help of a tattooed hacker, originally played by Noomi Rapace and later by Rooney Mara.

Iron Man 3

Writer/director Shane Black clearly has a thing about Christmas. Many of his flicks — including Iron Man 3 — take place during the holiday season, among them Lethal Weapon, The Last Boy Scout, The Long Kiss Goodnight and Kiss Kiss Bang Bang. There's something about a Christmas setting that ably unites varied characters and pulls together a sprawling storyline while driving home key plot points, while blowing stuff up, of course.

Goodfellas

This Martin Scorsese classic makes the cut by way of the fact it spans several decades and therefore includes a holiday-themed scene, and it is a doozy featuring Robert De Niro's trademark intensity: After a lucrative heist leaves the mobsters flush with cash, some arrive at a holiday party flaunting the spoils, sending De Niro's pragmatic Jimmy into a fury for attracting unwanted attention.

About a Boy

The holiday shmaltz sneaks up on you in this Hugh Grant romantic comedy about a self-absorbed bachelor who is more humbug than ho-ho-ho. Until he befriends a young boy and the boy's suicidal mum, of course, and gradually learns there's more to life than hook-ups and his posh hipster toys. Added holiday points come from the fact Grant's character lives on royalties from his father's song Santa's Super Sleigh.

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Bruce Willis ALL IMAGES GETTY

Willis and wife expecting baby number two

Bruce Willis is reportedly set to be a father once again, with wife Emma Heming expecting the couple's second child, according to Us Weekly. Willis and Heming are also parents to one-year-old daughter Mabel, while Willis also has three daughters — Rumer, Scout and Tallulah — with ex-wife Demi Moore.

Kelly LeBrock

LeBrock arrested for driving under the influence

Weird Science star Kelly LeBrock was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence following a routine traffic stop in Santa Barbara last month, according to E! News. The model and actress — famous for her "don't hate me because I'm beautiful" Pantene ads from the '80s — failed to stop at a stop sign and was exceeding the speed limit and straddling the double yellow line when cops pulled her over. She then reportedly failed field sobriety tests and was arrested "without incident."

The Word

Lawrence condemns fat insults

Jennifer Lawrence is going on the offensive when it comes to Hollywood's warped body image standards. "I just think it should be illegal to call somebody fat on TV," the star tells Barbara Walters in an interview. "Because why is humiliating people funny? I get it, and I do it too, we all do it. But I think when it comes to the media, the media needs to take responsibility for the effect that it has on our younger generation, on these girls who are watching these television shows and picking up how to talk and how to be cool."

Julia Roberts

Roberts did not relish a bit of rough and tumble with Streep

Surprisingly, Julia Roberts didn't relish the opportunity to tackle Meryl Streep and wrestle her to the carpet in August: Osage County, she revealed during a post-premiere Q & A. "I didn't look forward to it," Roberts says. "It's not how I saw the dream of my time with Meryl Streep. But she was a worthy opponent. She was not going down without some scratches and some heels in thighs." And while there were stunt personnel on hand to help the actresses, Roberts handled her tackling herself, apparently. "Julia didn't need a stunt double because she's plenty tough," Streep says.

Twitter

@Johncusack
So good to check back in with CNN every few years — Piers Morgan in a fiery debate with Ann Coulter whether Santa is white

@JuddApatow
When someone says there was too much marketing of Anchorman 2 I usually say 'you go up against The Hobbit without marketing. FU grandma!'

@oliviawilde
I broke into @jayleno's dressing room and stole one of his jackets for my fetus.

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LIFE 3

Their style is in the stars

Forget trying to break your giftees down into the usual gift guide categories of personality type or price. We spoke to identical twin sisters Tali and Ophira Edut, a.k.a .The AstroTwins, to find out what each star sign typically desires when it comes to the season of goodwill.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Aries

"As a fire sign, Aries are very competitive, so accessories that draw attention and frame the face would be good options."

Maison Michel boater $616, net-a-porter.com

Taurus

"The bull likes purposeful items, like pajamas and shoes, with an understated design."

Frends Layla leather and rose gold headphones $214, net-a-porter.com

Gemini

"They have a bit of a wacky, boho style. They're very curious and love to explore. Opt for natural fabrics and fruity fragrances."

Ilse Jacobsen lace up wellies $164, gift-library.com

Libra

"Libras love presents that look pretty and cosmetics that feel indulgent rather than just practical."

Laura Mercier almond coconut milk honey bath $51, john-lewis.com

Scorpio

"Scorpios love to embrace a dramatic atmosphere. They have expensive taste and love exclusives."

Elle Macpherson Intimates lace bra $57, net-a-porter.com

Sagittarius

"They travel a lot, items that make plane rides and road trips easier or more fun would be good options."

Lotus Wei Pure Energy mist $48, beingcontent.com

Cancer

"They have an almost grandmotherly style, which extends to their wardrobe, too."

Penhaligon's Bluebell eau de toilette $140, penhaligons.com

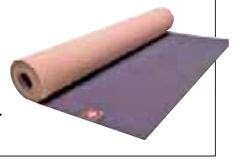
Leo

"Leos are very outgoing and love to socialize, so look for gifts that have a cool and unusual pattern."

Marc by Marc Jacobs tablet case $40.60, shopbop.com

Virgo

"Anything that encourages relaxation and sends them a subtle sign that they need to unwind"



eKO lite yoga mat $48, manduka.com

Capricorn

"Capricorns want good quality items with a minimalist design. "

Leather wrap gloves $64, stories.com

Aquarius

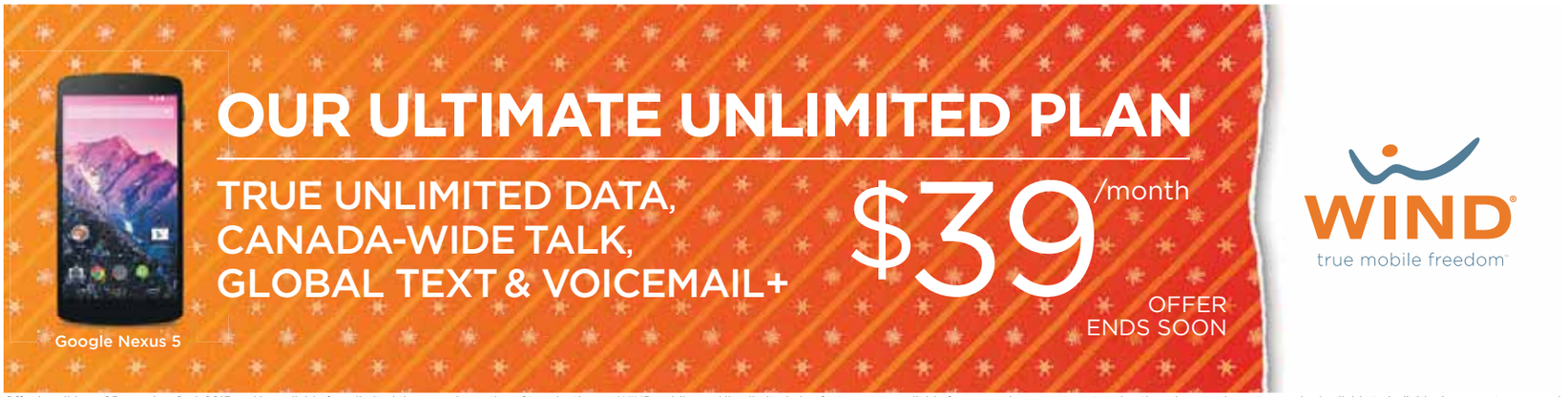
"Anything that embraces their boho, wacky style would be warmly welcomed."

Lucy Folk silver taco bracelet $115, matchesfashion.com

Pisces

"Pisceans adore anything mystical. Ideas include natural and precious materials to create a serene atmosphere or channeling positive vibes."

Essential oil soy wax candle $30, bsabcandles.com



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Mid-century mash-up

The 1950s and '60s have offered up a lot of home-decor inspiration over the past year — anything retro or vintage-influenced is hot-hot-hot. The look is a mishmash of past design that can encompass a trip to the parental basement or a hunt through a vintage shop, and retailers have cleverly channelled it. Here are some trendy and stylish products to transport you back to a Mad Men era.

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

Shiny citrus tones against deep grey stoneware lends retro style to dinner parties. Verte Dinnerware 16-piece set, $79, urbanbarn.com.

Adorn your dresser with heirloom-style brooches without robbing Mom's jewel box. Keepsake Brooch Knob, $14 US, anthropologie.com.

Straight out of Granny's china cabinet, fanciful flatware dresses up a modern table. Flores Flatware, from $7 per piece, zarahome.com.

Save your quarters with this modernized pay phone and savings bank all in one; the perfect wall phone for calling a taxi. Crosley Vintage Style Pay Telephone, $90, sears.ca.

Inspired by late '50s Danish mid-century design; open and airy for a light look. Patrik Accent Chair, $1,600, thebay.com.

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SHOPPERS DRUG MART
SEE WHAT'S NEW... CHECK OUT OUR LATEST OFFER ON PAGE 27

No need to be bitter if the eggplant sandwiches turn out a little cheesy

Ingredients

4 portions

- 1 whole egg
- 2 tbsp water or 2% milk
- 1 cup seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp minced fresh garlic
- 10 slices of eggplant, skin on
- 3/4 cup tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan

ROSE REISMAN
for more, visit
rosereisman.com

Eggplant, a healthy vegetable, is often loaded with fat and calories from the amount of oil used in frying or sautéing it.

This baked version omits the oil, and it turns out great! Purchase fresh young eggplant; when overripe, it becomes bitter. If the skin doesn't spring back when pressed, then it's too old.

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Spray a large baking sheet with cooking oil

2. Whisk the egg with the water in a small bowl. Combine the bread crumbs, parsley, Parmesan and garlic on a plate, mixing well. Dip the eggplant in the egg mixture, then coat with the bread crumb mixture. Place on the prepared pan. Bake, turning once, for 20 minutes or until tender.

3. Spread half of the tomato sauce in a large casserole dish. Place 5 eggplant slices over top. Top each with remaining tomato sauce. Add half the mozzarella cheese and top with remaining eggplant slices. Top with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan. Bake for five minutes or until the cheese is melted.

Preparation time 10 minutes
Cooking time 25 minutes

Cheesy Eggplant Sandwiches

A delicious combination of eggplant and cheese. ROSE REISMAN

Mind the App

How to make Substitutions

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
life@metronews.ca

iPhone/iPad
$0.99

Holiday meals can be tricky with guests who have allergies or special needs. This handy reference will help you pick out replacement ingredients without changing recipes or abandoning family traditions.

Recipe. Mango and brie quesadillas

In a small bowl, combine mango, jalapeno, onion and cilantro. Add lime juice, mixing well to combine. (Make ahead: Prepare mango salsa up to 2 hours in advance. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.) Divide brie evenly among tortillas, laying it on the lower half. Divide mango salsa evenly on top of brie. Fold each tortilla in half.

Preheat contact grill. (If your contact grill has more than one temperature setting, set it to high.)

Spray both sides of contact grill with vegetable cooking spray or oil. Place quesadillas on grill with folded side closest to front edge. (This prevents cheese from running down into the drip tray.)

Close lid. Grill for 2 to 3 minutes or until golden brown and crisp.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ingredients

- 1 mango, peeled and chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) minced red onion
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) chopped fresh cilantro
- Juice of 1 lime
- 250 g (8 oz) brie, thinly sliced
- 8 tortillas (25 cm/10 inches in diameter)

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WHL

Giants look to add scoring before trade deadline

With the Vancouver Giants eyeing a potential spot among the top four in the WHL's Western Conference, general manager Scott Bonner is looking to buy rather than sell.

The Giants began their Christmas break after a 3-1 loss to the Prince George Cougars on Sunday — which followed wins over the Everett Silvertips in a Friday-Saturday home-and-home set — but sit seventh in the conference, seven points back of the fourth-place Victoria Royals.

Bringing in a scoring threat is the focus for Bonner.

"I look at our team and when we have struggled, even as of late, it's been just we have trouble finding a way to get that last goal," Bonner told Metro on Tuesday.

"I think that when the playoffs come, it gets harder anyways. If we could get one more set of hands."

The WHL has a holiday roster freeze, which kicked in Sunday and lasts until Dec. 27, said Bonner.

However, discussions with other GMs from around the league will continue over the next few days. This year's trade deadline again falls on Jan. 10.

Adding a scorer is only one item on Bonner's Christmas wish list.

A healthy roster and avoiding supplemental discipline from the league are also on that list.

Defenceman Mason Geertsen just concluded a three-game ban for a checking to the head major penalty from Dec. 10.

Giants captain and defenceman Dalton Thrower received a two-game suspension on Tuesday for a hit to the head call in Sunday's loss to Prince George. CAM TUCKER/METRO

Another Canucks D-man bites the dust

NHL. Young blue-liner was injured in Tuesday's shootout loss to Wild

CAM TUCKER
cam.tucker@metronews.ca

The Vancouver Canucks will be without another one of their top-six defencemen on Thursday.

Ryan Stanton was injured in the second period of Tuesday's loss to the Minnesota Wild and has flown back to Vancouver for further evaluation, said head coach John Tortorella, as per the Canucks' official Twitter account on Wednesday.

Stanton suffered the injury when he went heavily and awkwardly into the end boards, going back for a puck in the defensive zone.

He appeared to injure his left leg; however, the nature of his injury has not been disclosed.

Wild enforcer Zenon Konopka was assessed a minor penalty for tripping on the play.

"It shouldn't have been a minor. That's what I thought," Tortorella told reporters in Minnesota following the game. "We're trying to get that play out of the game."

The Canucks continue their current three-game road trip Thursday against the Dallas Stars. It ends Friday against the rival Chicago Blackhawks.

Stanton, with only one game of NHL experience prior to this season and claimed off waivers from the Blackhawks at the end of September, had been playing well for the Canucks, fitting in seamlessly amongst a group of defencemen that has mostly been together for a few years now and has a veteran presence.

The 24-year-old Stanton has one goal and 11 points in 36 games. Beyond his offensive production, he's been steady and reliable on most nights, displaying a gritty aspect to his game and earning praise a couple of times from Tortorella.

Henrik Sedin, left, and Daniel Sedin help defenceman Ryan Stanton off the ice after he was injured during the second period against the Wild in St. Paul, Minn., on Tuesday. ANN HEISENFELT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

M.I.A.

Ryan Stanton joins fellow injured blue-liner Alex Edler, who has missed the last six games with what appeared to be a lower-body injury.

Alex Edler GETTY IMAGES FILE

Based on Tortorella's comments Tuesday night, it doesn't appear the Canucks will call anyone up from the Utica Comets in the American Hockey League.

The Canucks finished Tuesday's game with five defencemen, with Dan Hamhuis eclipsing 30 minutes of ice time.

That would mean Andrew Alberts, a healthy scratch in 30 of 36 games, draws back into the lineup as the sixth defenceman.

MLS. TSN to broadcast all Whitecaps MLS games next season

A multi-year partnership extension between the Vancouver Whitecaps and telecommunications giant Bell means all of the Major League Soccer club's games will be broadcast on TSN, beginning in 2014.

The Whitecaps made the announcement Wednesday morning.

According to last season's television schedule found on the league's website, TSN carried only eight Whitecaps games throughout the entire MLS regular season, while TSN2 carried two Vancouver matches.

That sports network is now the official broadcaster of the Whitecaps, meaning it will carry all of the club's MLS regular-season and playoff games next season.

Amway Canadian Championship games will still be broadcast on Sportsnet, Metro has been told.

Bell will also carry its brand on all official men's and women's Whitecaps jerseys, according to a statement from the club.

"This is a great day for Whitecaps FC fans across the country," said Rachel Lewis, the Whitecaps' chief operating officer, in a statement.

"We are proud to call TSN … home and are excited to provide our fans with unprecedented access to Whitecaps FC coverage nationwide."

Switching from the business side to player personnel, the Whitecaps selected midfielder Mehdi Ballouchy with the seventh pick in Stage 2 of Wednesday's MLS Re-Entry Draft.

The 30-year-old Ballouchy has played in 185 MLS matches, beginning in 2006 with Real Salt Lake.

He was traded from the New York Red Bulls to the San Jose Earthquakes in July of 2012. He's played in 11 matches with the Earthquakes since then, missing time in both seasons with an ACL injury.

The Whitecaps have seven days to make Ballouchy a contract offer to retain him for the upcoming 2014 season.

CAM TUCKER/METRO

4 SPORTS

Jason Pominville scores the shootout-winning goal against the Canucks' Roberto Luongo on Tuesday in St. Paul, Minn.
ANN HEISENFELT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canucks could use a little TLC from Coach T

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Ronnie Shuker
vancouver@metronews.ca

Coach John Tortorella wasn't happy about his team blowing a 2-1 lead and ultimately losing to the Wild 3-2, but let's hope he cuts his Canucks some slack. Sure, the loss stopped their winning streak at seven, but they were 14-1-0 when leading after 40 minutes heading into Tuesday's matchup with Minnesota, so it was an uncharacteristic defeat. And hey, at least they got a point and fans and media got yet another golden nugget from Torts in his post-game press conference: "We suck in the shootout."

At 1-4, Vancouver does, indeed, stink at it. But their olfactory-offensive shootout skills aside, the Canucks still have a great thing going and a lot of good came out of their seven straight wins.

Up front, Ryan Kesler caught fire with five goals and eight points, and the team got secondary scoring from Chris Higgins (three goals, eight points), Mike Santorelli (two goals, seven points) and Jason Garrison (one goal, nine points). On defence, Vancouver allowed just 10 goals over those seven games. In goal, Roberto Luongo went 5-0, with a 1.19 goals-against average and a .962 save percentage, and Eddie Lack was even better in two starts, going 2-0 and posting a 1.00 GAA and .968 SP.

Now the trick is to get the good times rolling again. After all, the three teams ahead of them in the Pacific (Anaheim, Los Angeles and San Jose) just keep winning, and Phoenix is only four points behind with a pair of games in hand. What little ground the Canucks have made up so far in December they can ill-afford to give back.

As Vancouver approaches the halfway point of the season, the team has finally found the consistency it lacked the first 2 1/2 months. It takes time for a new coach to break in a team, and it takes a while for players to warm up to a new bench boss as bossy as Tortorella.

In the NHL, momentum can be as volatile as Tortorella's temper. No doubt, the coach kept his team from getting too high at any point on its seven-game roll, but now a little mollycoddling is in order to keep the troops invested.

With the holiday season approaching, here's hoping Tortorella gives his players a little TLC over Christmas.

NBA

Heat rally to top rival Pacers

Dwyane Wade scored 32 points, Ray Allen hit a go-ahead three-pointer with just under a minute left and the Miami Heat erased a 15-point deficit in the second half to beat the Indiana Pacers 97-94 on Wednesday night.

LeBron James scored 24 on a bad left ankle for the Heat, who closed within a game of the Eastern Conference-leading Pacers. Chris Bosh added 15 points for Miami, including a three that tied it late in the fourth. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Boston	34	23	9	2	94	70	48
Montreal	36	21	12	3	91	76	45
Tampa Bay	34	20	11	3	93	82	43
Detroit	36	15	12	9	91	99	39
Toronto	36	17	16	3	99	105	37
Ottawa	36	14	16	6	101	118	34
Florida	35	13	17	5	81	110	31
Buffalo	34	8	23	3	59	98	19

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Pittsburgh	36	25	10	1	112	78	51
Washington	34	18	13	3	107	102	39
Carolina	34	14	13	7	79	94	35
Philadelphia	34	15	15	4	81	93	34
NY Rangers	35	16	17	2	79	95	34
New Jersey	35	14	15	6	83	87	34
Columbus	34	14	16	4	87	95	32
NY Islanders	35	9	19	7	85	121	25

Wednesday's results
New Jersey 5 Ottawa 2
Pittsburgh 4 NY Rangers 3 (SO)
Tuesday's results
Boston 2 Calgary 0
Buffalo 4 Winnipeg 2
Tampa Bay 3 NY Islanders 2 (SO)
Florida 3 Toronto 1
Anaheim 5 Detroit 2
Montreal 3 Phoenix 1
Philadelphia 5 Washington 2
Minnesota 3 Vancouver 2 (SO)
San Jose 4 St. Louis 2
Chicago 3 Nashville 1
Dallas 3 Colorado 2
Los Angeles 3 Edmonton 0
Thursday's games
All Times Eastern
Phoenix at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Boston at Buffalo, 7 p.m.
Columbus at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Calgary at Detroit, 7:30 p.m.
Nashville at Tampa Bay, 7:30 p.m.
Florida at Ottawa, 7:30 p.m.
Montreal at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Vancouver at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
Edmonton at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
San Jose at Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m.

WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Chicago	37	25	7	5	138	102	55
St. Louis	33	22	7	4	114	80	48
Colorado	33	22	10	1	96	78	45
Minnesota	36	20	11	5	84	83	45
Dallas	33	16	12	5	95	101	37
Nashville	34	16	15	3	78	95	35
Winnipeg	36	15	16	5	95	106	35

PACIFIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Anaheim	36	24	7	5	116	91	53
Los Angeles	35	23	8	4	97	68	50
San Jose	34	21	7	6	112	84	48
Vancouver	36	20	10	6	100	86	46
Phoenix	33	18	10	5	105	103	41
Calgary	34	13	16	5	86	108	31
Edmonton	36	11	22	3	93	123	25

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Friday's games
Anaheim at New Jersey, 7 p.m.
Washington at Carolina, 7 p.m.
NY Islanders at NY Rangers, 7 p.m.
Florida at Winnipeg, 8 p.m.
Vancouver at Chicago, 8 p.m.
Saturday's games
Calgary at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.
Phoenix at Ottawa, 2 p.m.
Colorado at Los Angeles, 4 p.m.
Montreal at Nashville, 7 p.m.
Anaheim at NY Islanders, 7 p.m.
Carolina at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at Boston, 7 p.m.
Detroit at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Philadelphia at Columbus, 7 p.m.
New Jersey at Washington, 7 p.m.
St. Louis at Edmonton, 10 p.m.
Dallas at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

SCORING LEADERS

	G	A	Pts
Crosby, Pgh	19	28	47
Kane, Chi	20	26	46
Malkin, Pgh	9	32	41
Getzlaf, Ana	16	23	39
Ovechkin, Wash	28	10	38
Tavares, NYI	13	25	38
Perry, Ana	22	15	37

Not including last night's games

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

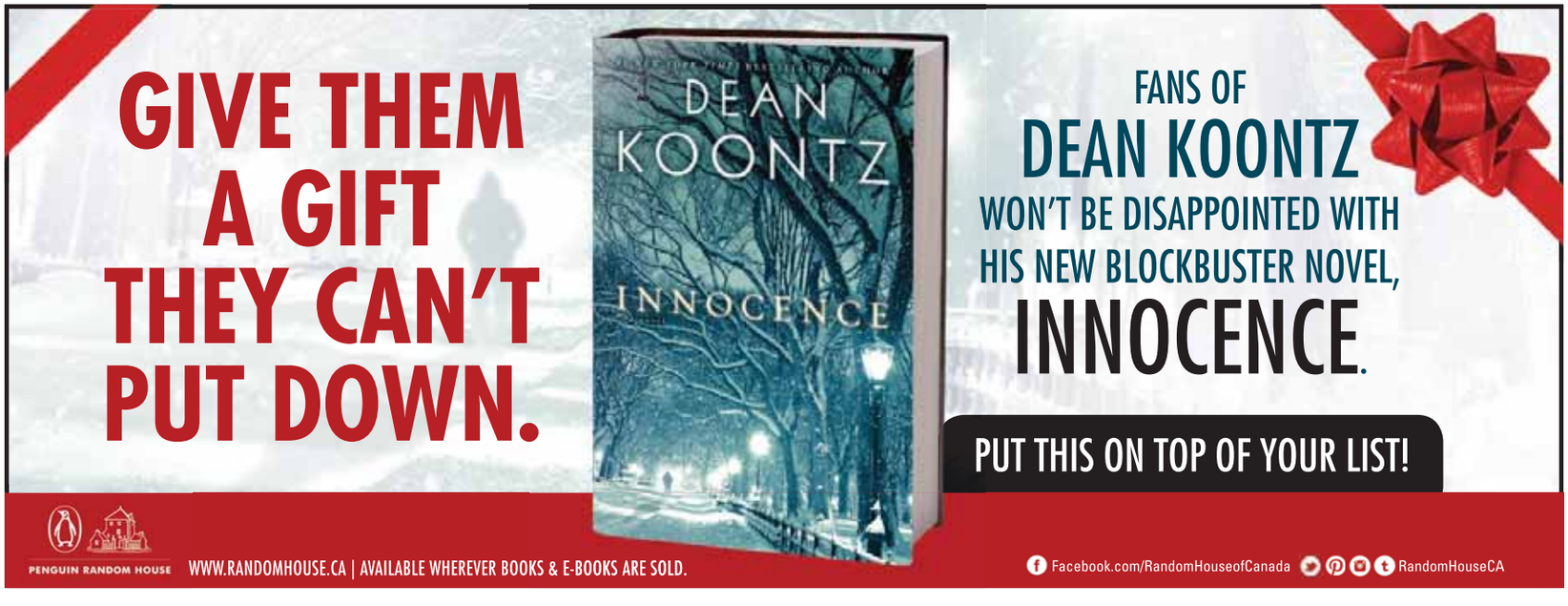
	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Indiana	20	5	.800	—
d-Miami	19	6	.760	1
Atlanta	14	12	.538	6½
d-Boston	12	15	.444	9
Detroit	13	14	.481	8
Charlotte	12	14	.462	8½
Washington	11	13	.458	8½
Chicago	9	14	.391	10
Toronto	9	14	.391	10
Cleveland	9	15	.375	10½
Brooklyn	9	16	.360	11
Orlando	8	18	.308	12½
New York	7	17	.292	12½
Philadelphia	7	19	.269	13½
Milwaukee	5	19	.208	14½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Portland	22	4	.846	—
Oklahoma City	20	4	.833	1
d-San Antonio	19	5	.792	2
d-L.A. Clippers	17	9	.654	5
Houston	16	9	.640	5½
Phoenix	14	9	.609	6½
Denver	14	10	.583	7
Dallas	14	10	.583	7
Golden State	14	12	.538	8
Minnesota	12	13	.480	9½
L.A. Lakers	12	13	.480	9½
New Orleans	11	12	.478	9½
Memphis	10	14	.417	11
Sacramento	7	17	.292	14
Utah	7	21	.250	16

x - clinched playoff berth; **y** - division; **z** - conference.

Wednesday's results
Utah 86 Orlando 82
Charlotte 104 Toronto 102 OT
Miami 97 Indiana 94
Atlanta 124 Sacramento 107
Detroit 107 Boston 106
Washington 113 Brooklyn 107
New York at Milwaukee
Portland at Minnesota
Memphis at Dallas
San Antonio at Phoenix
Chicago at Houston
New Orleans at L.A. Clippers
Thursday's games
Chicago at Oklahoma City, 8 p.m.
San Antonio at Golden State, 10:30 p.m.



Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You may have lots of big ideas in your mind but are you ever going to get around to turning them into something useful, something that makes a difference both to yourself and to others?

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You may resent having to pay for something you think you should get for free but if you make a scene you may end up paying even more.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Partnerships of all kinds have been under the spotlight of late and will remain so until the Sun moves out of your opposite sign this weekend.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
It may seem as if someone is trying to undermine your position, and maybe they are, but there is no need to worry about it.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You have been in impressive form of late but all good things must come to an end and life may not be quite so easy when the Sun changes signs on the 21st. If there is anything of a creative nature that needs doing then do it now.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you feel the need to kiss and make up with a partner or relative now is the time. If you leave it much longer you may find that it isn't so easy or, worse, that they have found the love they need with someone else.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
What happens over the next few days will help you to understand that your priorities are wrong, that you are worrying about the things you cannot change while neglecting the things you can.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Slow things right down and take stock of how far you have come, because only then will you be in a position to decide how far you still have to go.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
The Sun remains in your sign only until Saturday, so get busy and get as much done as you can between now and then.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
When the Sun moves into your sign this weekend a new solar year begins. Make it your objective, today and tomorrow, to look back over the past 12 months and learn what you can from your mistakes.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Spend as much time as you can with your friends today because you may not get so many opportunities to be sociable in the days and weeks to follow.

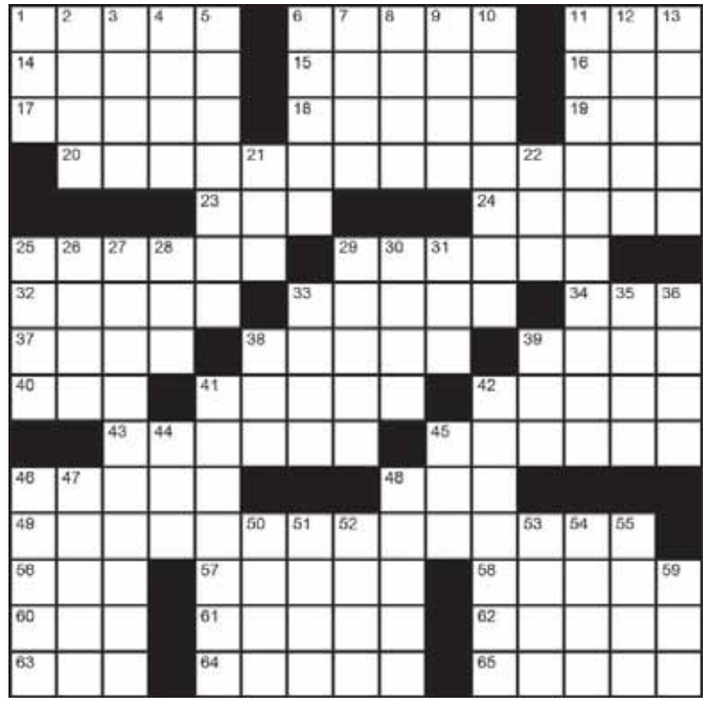
♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You need to convince those in positions of power that you deserve to be given more responsibility and the rewards that go with it. Timing is everything and the right time is now.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

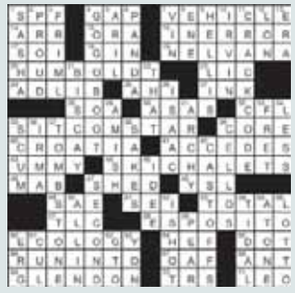
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Tropical nut
6. __ __ behold!
11. "Pick a Puppy" channel
14. "ER" actress Ms. Tierney
15. Ewoks' forest moon home
16. Not 'neath
17. 'Material' suffix
18. Invest
19. San Francisco's __ Valley
20. Prospector in "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer": 2 wds.
23. __-Jongg
24. Actor's tucked-into-shoes devices
25. Country song-stress, __ Lynne
29. Sidekick to #20-Across
32. Birchbark craft
33. Range
34. NHL official
37. With a flair for crafts
38. Lyrical lament
39. Bygone time
40. Golfer's gadget
41. Partake in Winter fun
42. "...not a creature was stirring, not even a __."
43. Prince __, British Columbia
45. Awakens
46. "The Birds" (1963) star Ms. Hedren
48. Highway topping
49. They're on the Canadian side at Niagara: 2 wds.
56. Pasta names suffix
57. Environment Minister, Ms. Aglukkaq
58. Donald Trump's first wife
60. '_' __ for Rimouski
61. Gourmand
62. 'frisco footballer
63. Actor, Daniel __ Kim
64. Skirt alternative
65. Kind of duck

Down
1. Dieter's stat.
2. Simple
3. Ballet outfit
4. Mr. Estrada
5. Alberta city between Red Deer and Edmonton
6. Bloodsucker
7. Never, __ __ occasion
8. Env. info
9. Morning's follower
10. Phys. of 1969 to 1976 TV: 2 wds.
11. Like many a Christmas Tree
12. "Count __ __." (I don't want to participate)
13. Lock of hair
21. "Nope."
22. Rap music's Kim
25. Hightail it
26. Tortoise's competitor
27. Hamlet in the Northwest Territories
28. Actress Myrna
29. "Grace Under Fire" star Ms. Butler
30. Try to persuade
31. Vachon treat, __ West
33. Wing-like
35. Poet's 'previously'
36. Charges
38. Just manage, __ out
39. Particular pronoun
41. Said one's lengthy piece
42. Banff National Park: __ Lake, it's glacier-fed
44. Sit-__ (Exercises)
45. UK military service
46. Race place
47. Ancient Greek colony
48. "__ are Not Enough" by Northern Lights
50. Singe
51. Table d'__ (Fixed price restaurant menu)
52. Threes - twos = whats?
53. Old Rome's 57
54. Ground
55. Dagger
59. ETA part, for short

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

7		8		4	5			1
	5		8					2
	1		3				8	
9							2	
		4	6		7	1		
	6							3
	7				2		1	
3					9		5	
6			5	1		8		

Yesteday's Sudoku

6	1	9	3	7	4	2	8	5
4	5	7	8	9	2	1	3	6
2	3	8	1	5	6	7	4	9
3	4	2	7	1	5	6	9	8
1	8	6	9	4	3	5	7	2
9	7	5	6	2	8	4	1	3
8	2	3	4	6	7	9	5	1
7	6	1	5	8	9	3	2	4
5	9	4	2	3	1	8	6	7

Today
1°/0°
Variable
Friday
4°/2°
Rain
70%
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Check the 14 day trend.
TWN incorporates MSC data

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